



Out of Balance

Berliner Platz

Study works about infographics and the Empirical

"Presently there are social processes evident, that make a balancing of social inequalities ever more unlikely, and that suggest a serious danger that society will drift apart – in a global and national as well as regional and local scale." Arch+, Out of Balance – Kritik der Gegenwart.

Arch+, Out of Balance - Kritik der Gegenwart

Das Seminar

In winter semester 2012/13 the Department of Sculptural Design/Prof. Achermann offered the seminar "Out of Balance". The seminar was based on a call for proposals by the architecture magazine Arch+ and was led by lecturers Megan Sullivan and Sven Kalden.

Our goal was, despite a large number of student participants, to facilitate an examination of empirical research as much as the visual processing of data and information. The students were put in the position to reflect on their own rolls as designers, and to question the supposed objectivity of 'information design'.

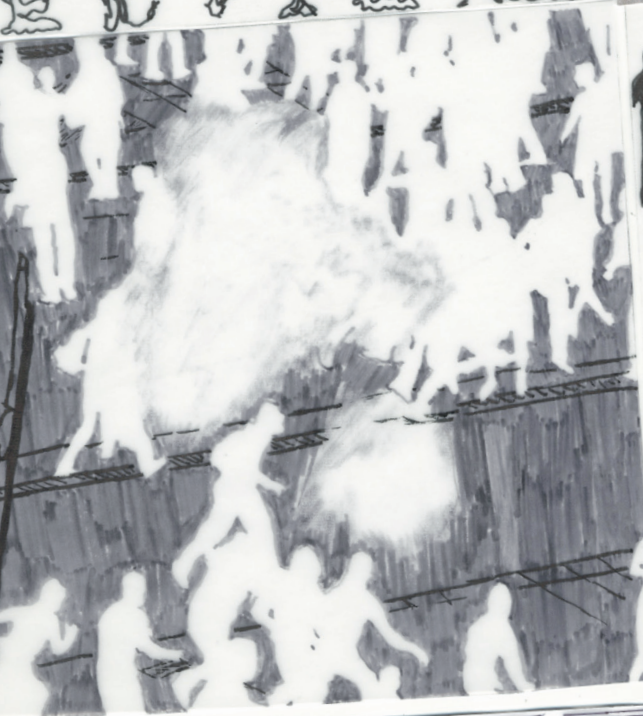
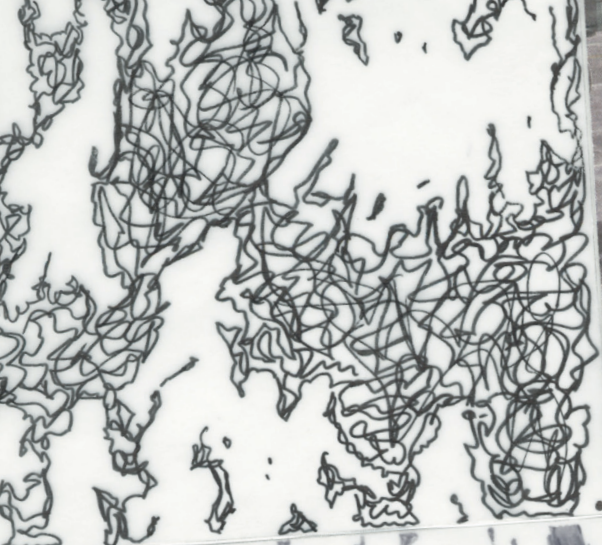
The seminar was structured in three parts. In the first part, design exercises were carried out that were not directly connected to the competition guidelines. Students created a collection of short essays about themes related to information graphics, including historical, philosophical, artistic and media-related topics.

In the second part, students developed their own projects related to the competition guidelines, carried out extensive research and explored ideas. The third part of the seminar focused significantly on the design and execution of their own infographics according to the framework of the competition.





Berliner Platz, Cottbus





Exercises 1/2

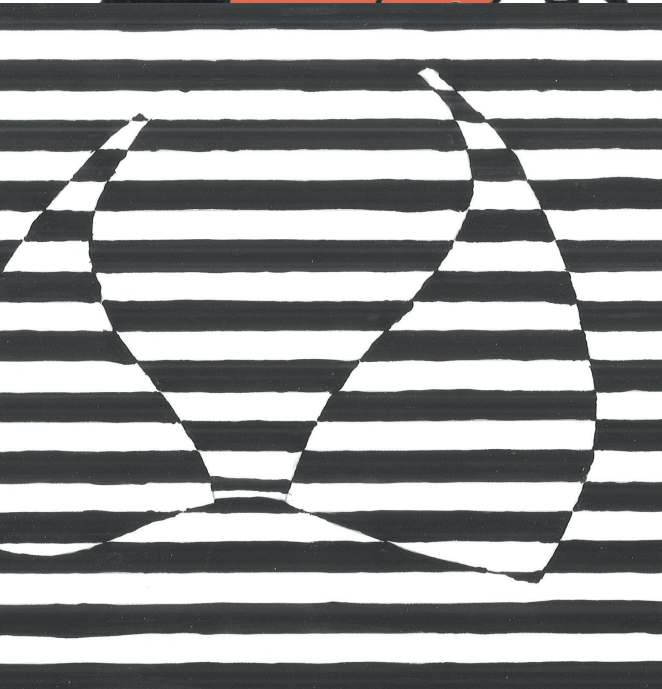
Information Reduction

At the beginning of the semester, we examined various examples out of art history categories like Minimal and Pop art. With pen, paint, brush, and tracing paper students attempted to reduce visual information from images out of magazines and newspapers, extracting new image or impression out of the original source material. The assignment was for each student to select an image and create a process of abstraction through its given formal image structure.

In a second exercise, students were asked to test out associations that combinations of form and color may incite through reception behavior. The exercise concentrated on how colors and forms might be read through established patterns of perception. For example, in advertisements, pink and magenta is often used for products intended for 'feminine' consumers, whereas grey and dark blue are associated with 'masculine' products. Themes included aesthetics associated with commonly used tropes of gender, serious/playful, hip/conservative.

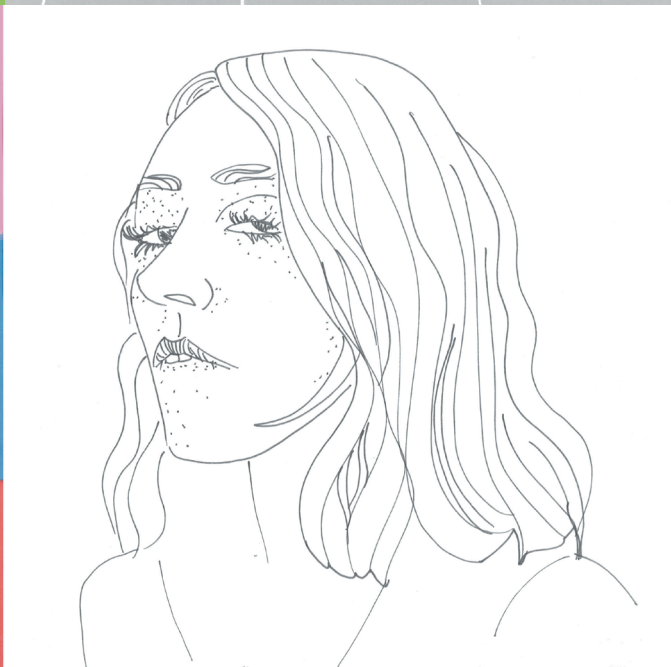
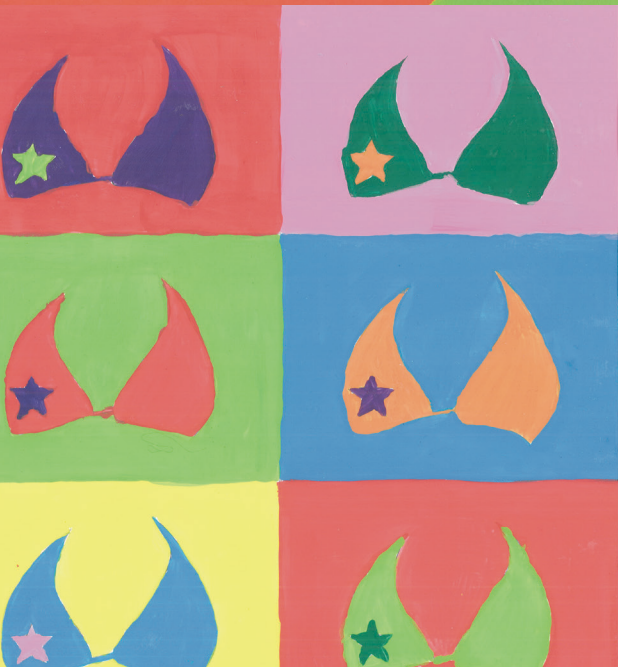












Exercise 3:

George Lakoff

In one of the early class meetings, the students were shown a videotaped lecture by Linguistic Professor George Lakoff titled "Frameworks, Empathy and Sustainability".

They were asked to follow the English-language lecture through sketches and notes, extracting what seemed important or interesting. After a short presentation of the results, the material was further developed.

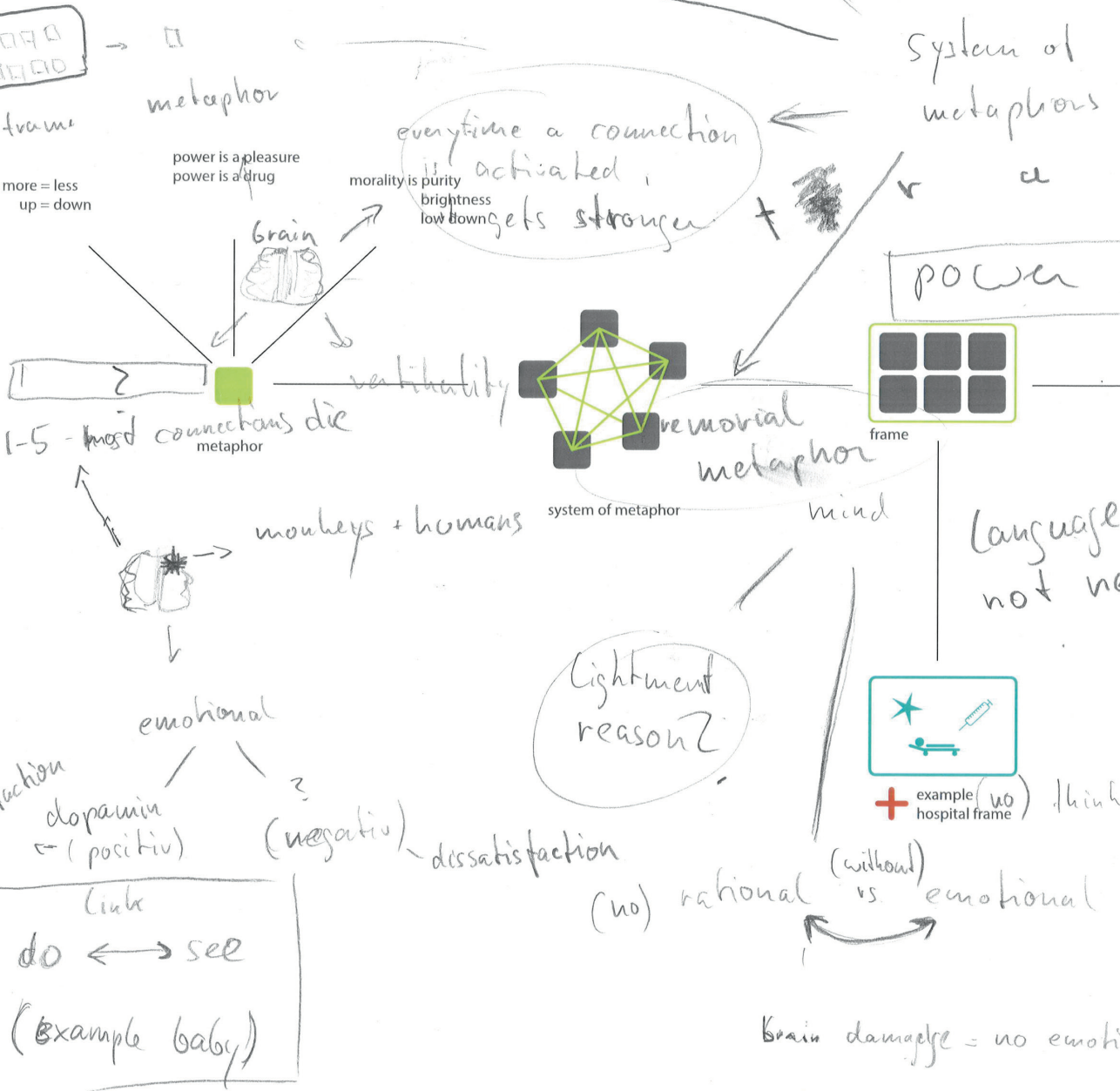
The intent was to refract a self-specified order out of more or less contingent information. The content of the lecture was related to the general conditions of our perception potential, of the cognitive processes that are definitive for our construction of reality.

Themes in the lecture included: consciousness, language, morality, reason, rationality, emotions, reality, family, state, ecology, politics.





What is morality = purity = brightness = low
Power is pleasure



empathy ↔ social connection

system family → system

George Lakoff

father

frames come
in systems

system family

hospital
frames



transferred to state system

experience of being governed
first by parents
learning right and wrong by punishment

hospital (frame)

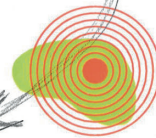
conditioning

is a drug



more - less
= =
up down

everytime a connection is activated,
it gets stronger



James

1 - 5 : most connections

rational

no rational thinking
without emotion

emotional

positiv
satisfaction



dissatisfaction
negativ

moral
politics

experience of being governed
(first time by parents)

strict
father - protect family - decider

Learning right and wrong
↳ punishment

The Empirical Student Questionnaire Results

Geburtsort: Deutschland 68%, außerhalb von
Year of birth 1980 to 1990, average 1988 _ Place
of birth: Germany 68%, outside of Germany 16%,
No answer 14%, Cottbus 2% _ Average number
of flights in the past year: 2.3 per Person _ Do you
listen to the radio? Yes 77%, No 21%, No Answer
2% _ Top 3 Brands of Shoe: Nike, Adidas, and
no brand _ Shoe size: From 31 to 48, average
size 41 _ Average number of cups of coffee per
day: 1.6 _ Who pays your expenses? Parents:
24%, Students alone: 20%, Parents and Students
together: 22%, Other: 15%, Student and other:
8%, all three: 8% _ Students rating in order of
importance: 1. Family 2. Success 3. Original ideas
4. Leave the country 5. Earn lots of money _ What
people are reading: Rene Decartes "Discours de
la method", Eric-Emmanuel Schmitt "Oscar et la
dame rose", Haruki Murakami "Sputnik Sweethe-
art", E.L. James "Shades of Grey", Franz Kafka
"Am Strand", Jakob Arjouni "Bruder Kemal" (...)
According to students, most students are: Male
27%, Female 5%, Equal numbers 59%, Undeci-
ded: 10% - According to the BTU website: 63%
Male, 36% Female _ Professors are 84% Male
and 16% Female _ Have you been to a demo?
Yes 80%, No 20% _ For what? Against student
fees, against Nazis and right-wing groups, against
nuclear energy, against cuts in University spen-
ding, against the merging of the BTU, against
social inequalities, to oppose the leadership in
home countries, for preserving the cultural herita-
ge in Spain.

50 questionnaires distributed, 44 filled out (42 in
German, 2 in English), 4 not filled out, 2 missing

Bitte nehmen Sie ein paar Minuten
zu beantworten. Es ist eine freie
verpflichtet auf die Fragen zu

Mein Geburtsjahr ist 1988.

Ich bin geboren in: Cottbus, nicht
ausserhalb Deutschland

Letztes Jahr bin ich 2 mal in

Ich höre Radio: ja / ~~nein~~.

Die Marke meiner Schuhe ist Adi

Sie wurden hergestellt in China

Farbe beige Grosse 3

Ich habe sie gekauft bei OSCO

Ich trinke 4 Tassen Kaffee pro

Mein Lebensunterhalt wird bezahlt

Am liebsten möchte ich: Erfolg vi
Eine Famil

Etwas das kürzlich passiert ist, c
Krankheit einer Familie

Das letzte Buch welches ich gelesen ha
tun hatte war: 9 das Symbo

Class Survey

Please take a few minutes to fill out the survey. This is a voluntary survey - you are not required to fill in the answers.

My year of birth is 1986.

I was born in: Cottbus, not Cottbus but in Germany, outside of Germany

In the last year, I flew in an airplane 1 times.

I listen to the radio: yes / no.

The brand of shoes I am wearing is Etnies.

They were made in China.

Color Multi

Size 45

Material Fabrik

I bought them at Caracas.

I drink 3 cups of coffee a day.

My expenses are currently paid by: me my parents other

I want most to: succeed earn lots of money have original ideas
have a family leave the country

One thing that recently gave me the creeps:

Bad Food

The last book I read not related to school was:

The Fall of the giants

Most students at this University are: men women same
amount

Most professors at the University are: men women same
amount

I have a friend from another country: yes / no
If yes, which country?

Spain and Germany

I know an unemployed person: yes / no

I have been to a demo: yes / no
If yes, for what?

Opposing the current government
in my country

Results will be tallied and shared within the class.

The Topic

Der Berliner Platz

The starting point of our investigation of the topic –Out of Balance– was a location in Cottbus in close proximity to the university: Berliner Platz.

From this tangible and observable place, students developed their individual focus that could be potentially connected to local or global inequalities. The goal was to extend beyond the local, seemingly unproblematic situation.

We presented the thesis that global, colonial and augrenzende structures can be traced in everyday, non-precarious spaces and locations, that are integrated in our everyday behavior and as consumers.

Slavoj Žižek:

“In order to maintain our reality, a complex machinery must be at work.”

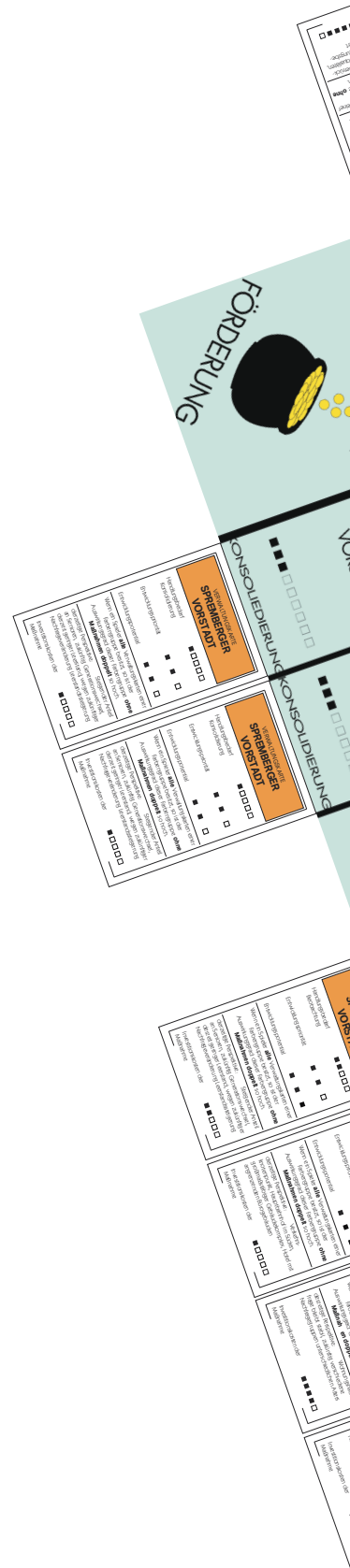
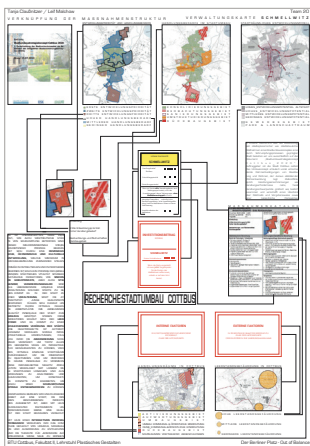
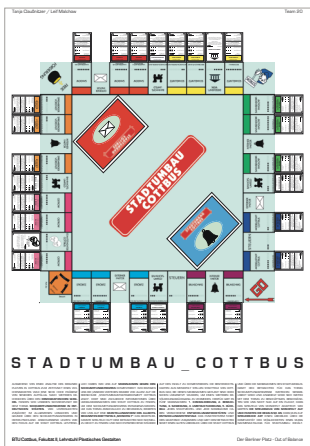
The practice of living the everyday can be read as an embodiment of values, ideologies and moral positions. Our actions and exchanges embody the acceptance of a profit-maximizing society.

We observed the Berliner Platz as a microcosm: a small area that encompasses everything that seems usual for an ‘average’ life. There is a space for culture (the Stadthalle), for shopping (Spree-Galerie), a hotel, post office, a TV and Radio station, a weekly outdoor market. Above all, there is an empty space: a largely unused area primarily functioning as a transit zone. The concrete space is a public rest area, suitable neither for flaneuring nor communicating





Demonstration, Berliner Platz



Urban Restructuring Cottbus

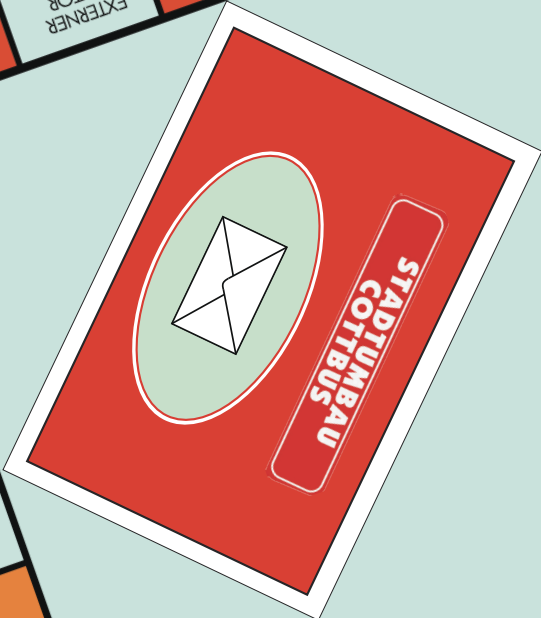
Weekly market at the Berliner Platz in Cottbus:

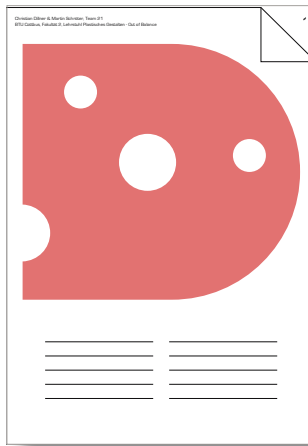
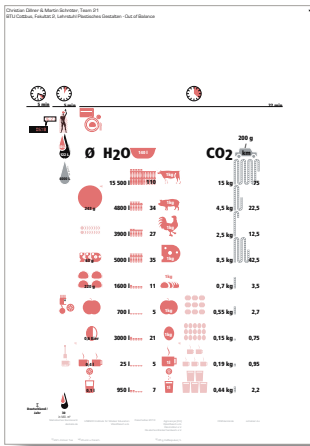
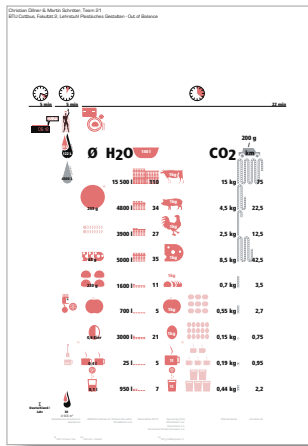
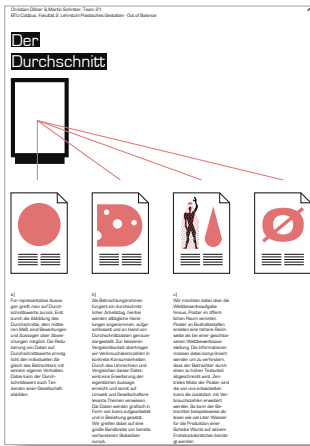
There is a large number of retirees and very few young people moving about. The aging population of many East German cities is a result of the rapid shrinking process. There is a lack of job possibilities, and young, qualified workers are emigrating – the quality of life in the regional inner cities is decreasing.

In this adaptation of the game 'Monopoly', the focus is on counteractive measures within districts of Cottbus – consolidation, restoration, restructuring, and demolition. Every player of this board game becomes part of the process and decides on the future of the city of Cottbus.



STADTUMBAU COTTBUS

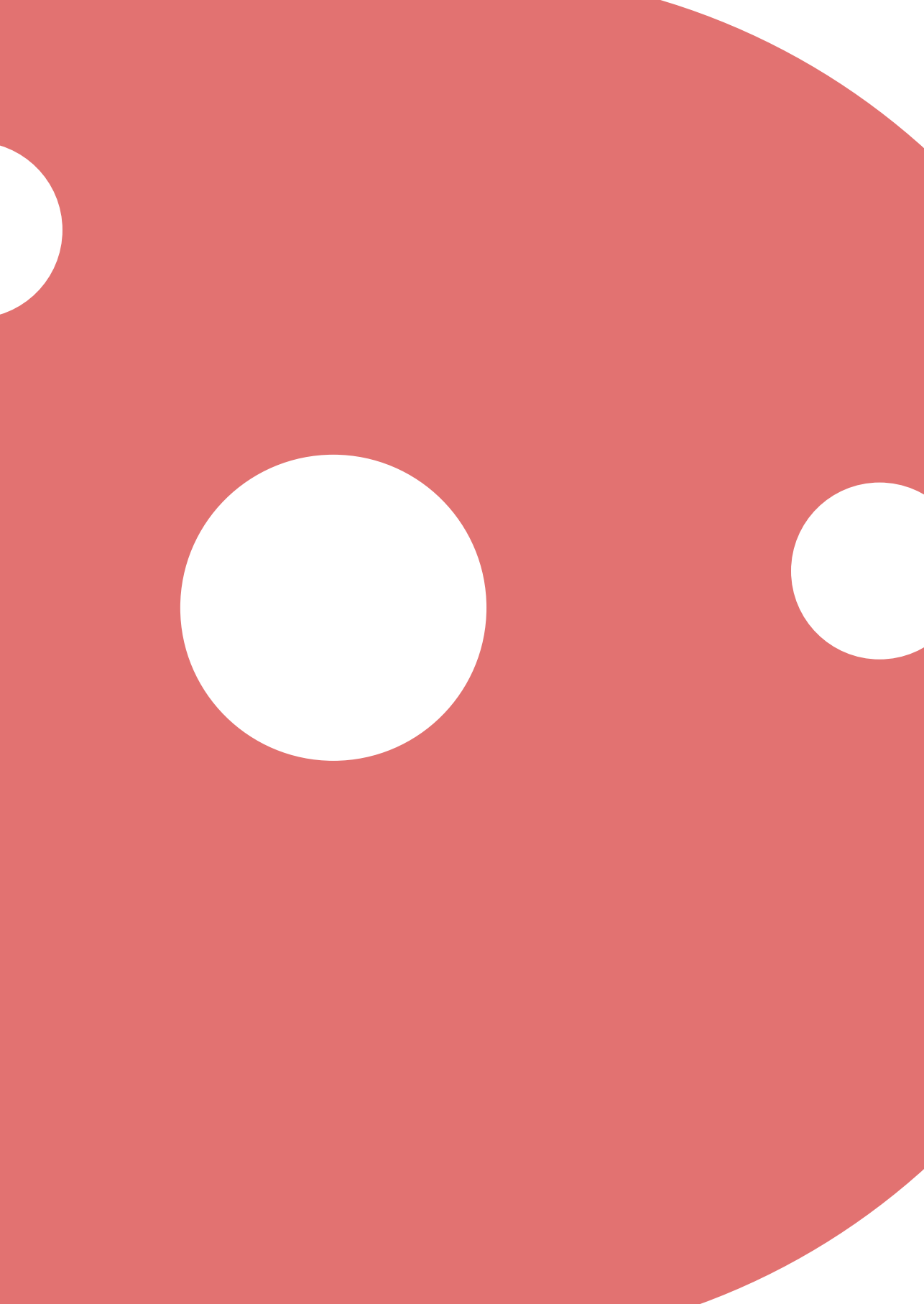


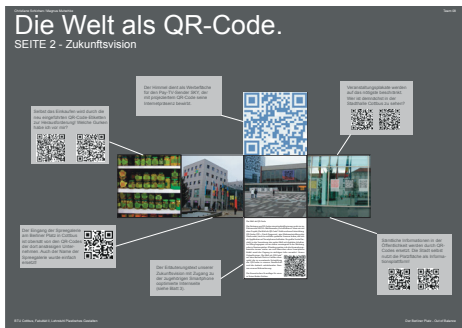
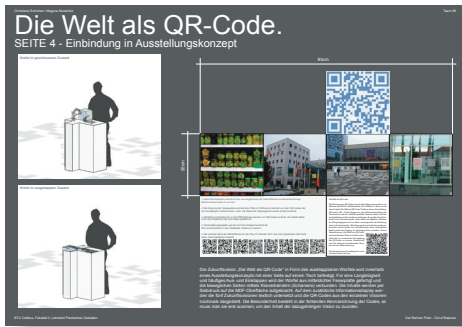
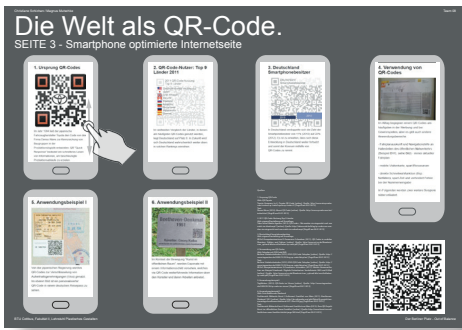


The Average

How does one construct a representative statement about the behavior of people? One relies on statistical averages and allows every individual to compare his or her own behavior with the average of society.

In this project, activities of an average workday are represented by icons of concrete units of consumption. The posters with this information are meant to be displayed within the urban landscape, for example at bus stops or on advertising columns. Passersby are given access to information such as how many liters of water are needed for the production of the sausage or cheese on a piece of toast for their breakfast.



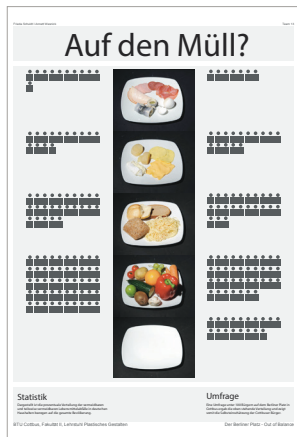


The World as QR-code

How does one orient oneself these days without having a Smartphone? The urban space is full of QR-codes: what started as parts of advertisements has now become part of everyday communication. Whether on a jar of pickles, bus and train schedules, public monuments or on visa stickers in a passport, necessary information will soon be available exclusively through these encryptions. What would happen, if suddenly communication occurred only through QR-codes? In our project, the proliferation of QR-codes is carried to an extreme: all possible information around Berliner Platz, whether it is posters, the signs on the shopping mall or city hall, and even the printed labels on products in the supermarket are replaced by QR-codes. Whoever does not have a scanner or Smartphone to decode the information, has no orientation.

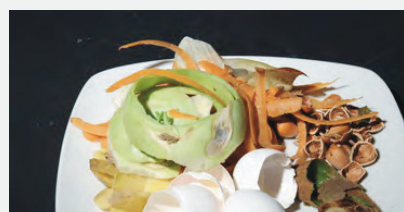
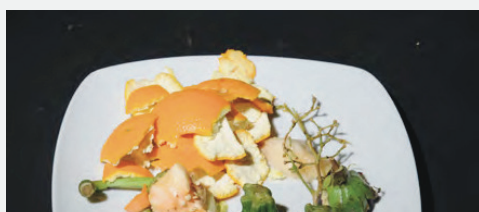
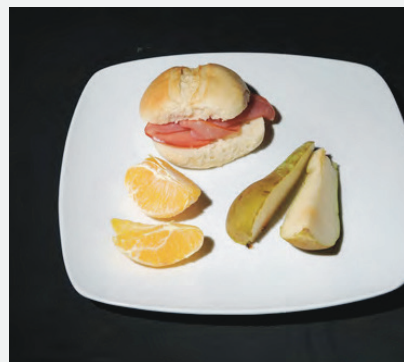


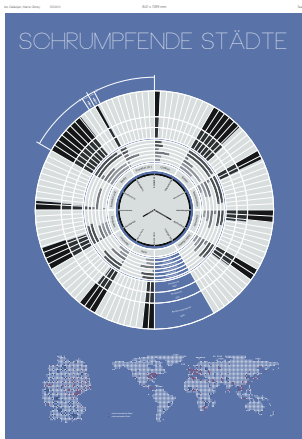
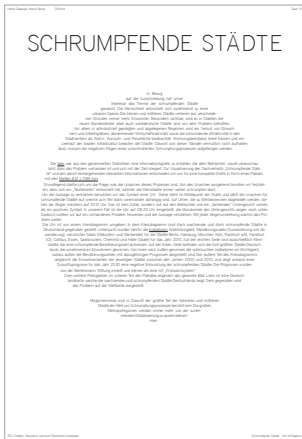




In the trash!

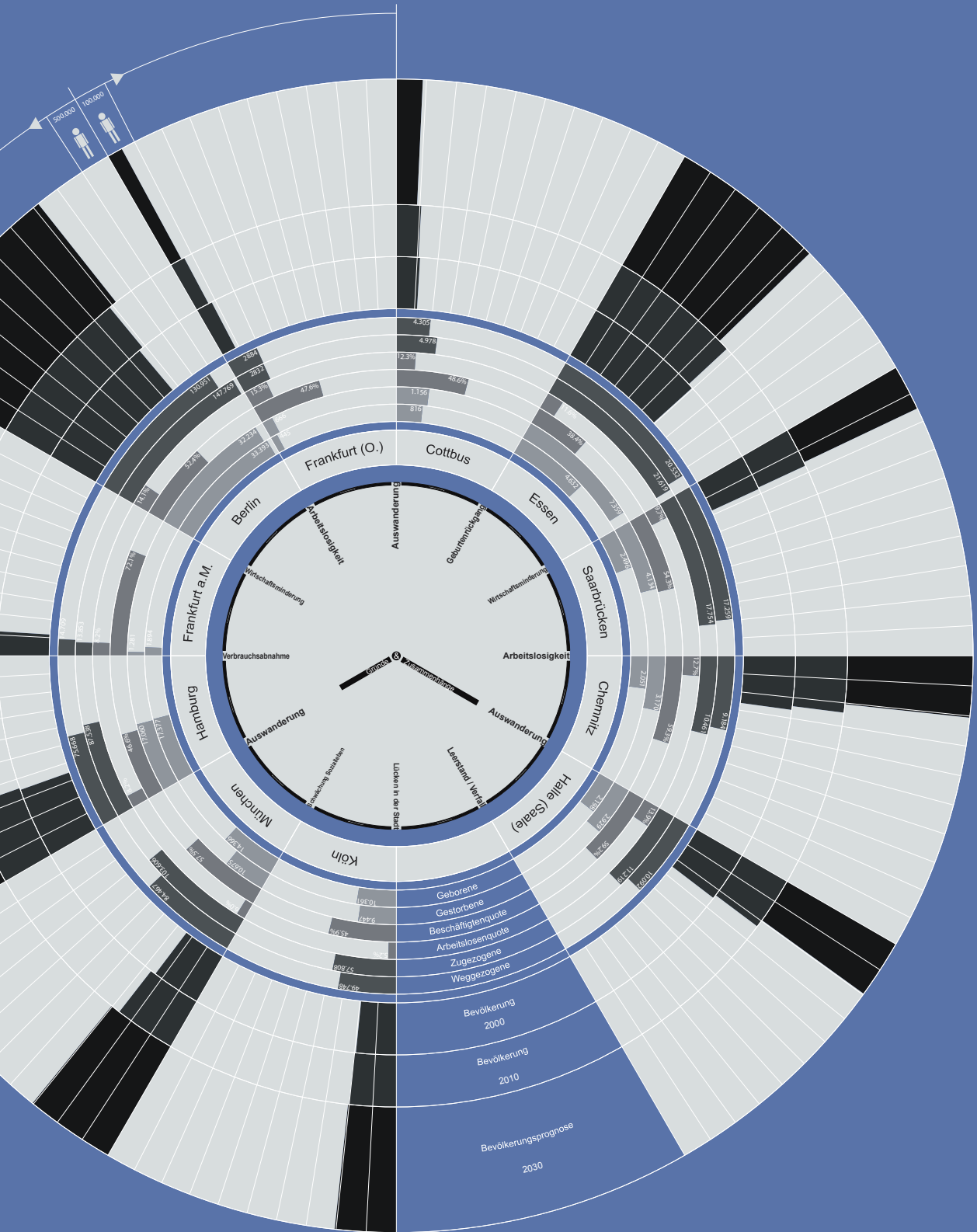
Every German throws away circa 225g of food per day. For a year, that amounts to circa 6,67 tons per household. In this sense, households produce the largest amount of trash, following industry and retail sectors. In our diagram, kitchen trash is separated into the categories: avoidable, partially avoidable, or unavoidable. Very high on the list of items thrown away is fruit and vegetables, followed by bread and pasta, then cheese and meat. In order to make this waste conscious, the observer sees a 225g plate in a variety of configurations, and therefore should become conscious of his or her own food waste.

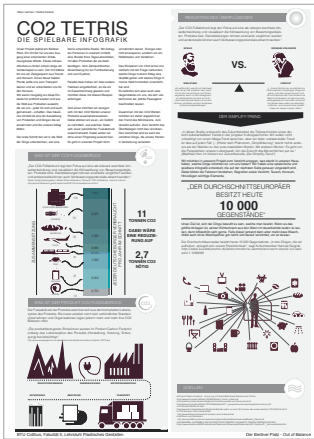
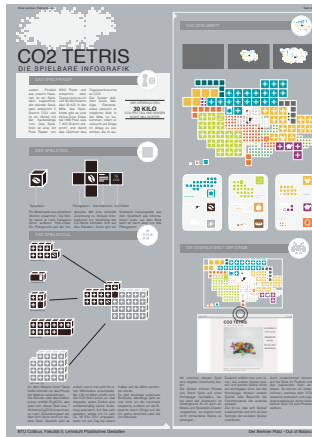
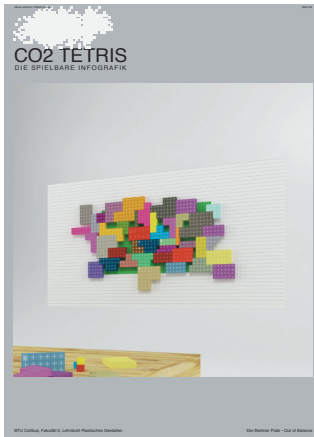


[illegible]

Shrinking Cities

The clock is ticking: In Germany and world-wide, emigration trends of large population groups, including those in rural areas as well as urban metropolises, can be observed. The consequences for these regions include decreasing economic and cultural activity, the loss of work spaces, and also a decreasing desirability of regional centers as spaces for living, working, and leisure. In this diagram, the most rapidly shrinking cities in Germany, like Halle or Cottbus, are compared with the most quickly expanding cities, like Berlin or Hamburg.



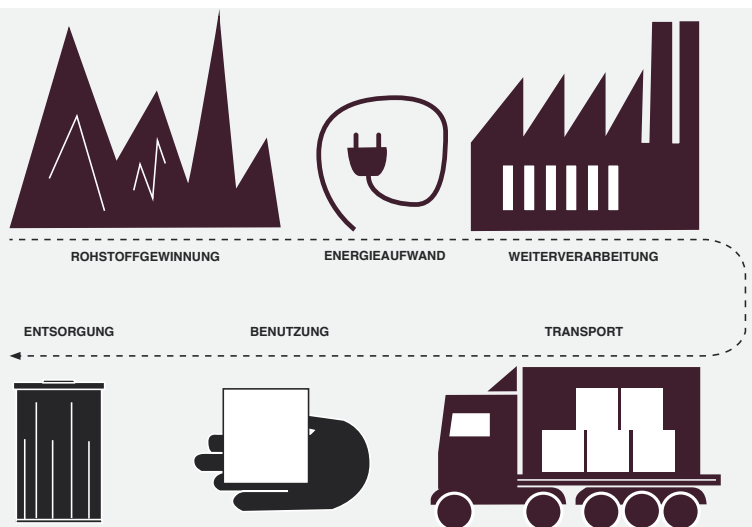
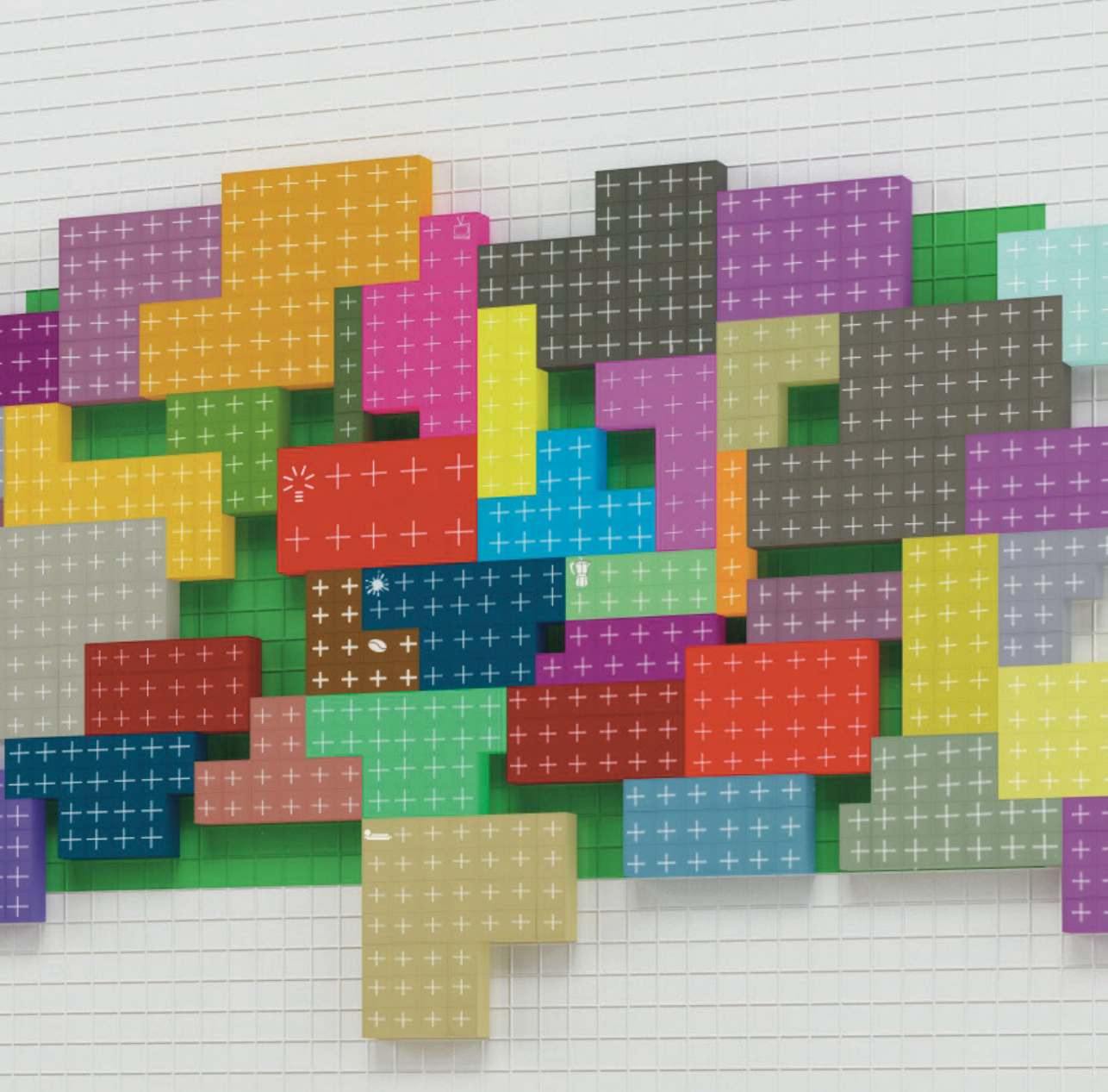


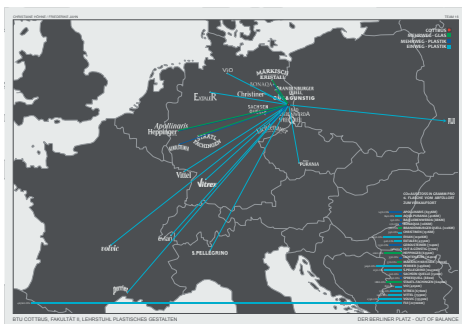
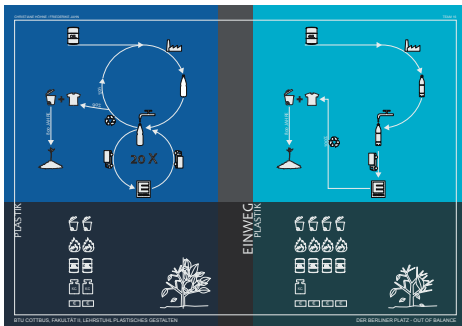
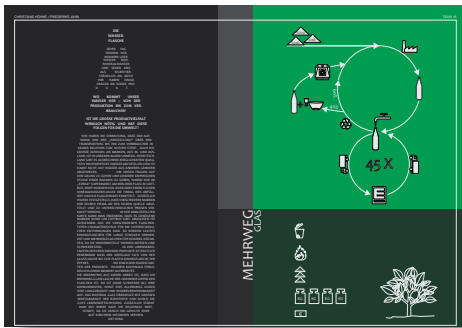
CO₂-Tetris - the playable Infographic

How many things does the average Western person own? An average European owns circa 10,000 objects and uses 30kg CO₂ per day. How much of that is actually necessary, how much is admissible?

The goal of this self-developed game of CO₂ Tetris is not to morally put into question the CO₂ usage, rather to encourage players to become aware of their own usage and the personal importance of things. The game is made up of cubes representing 5g CO₂. In the middle of the game board, there is a green zone, representing 7400g, the maximal daily consumption. In the center of this field, the player places the things that are personally most important, followed by the things that are less essential, and on the periphery are things that one could do without.



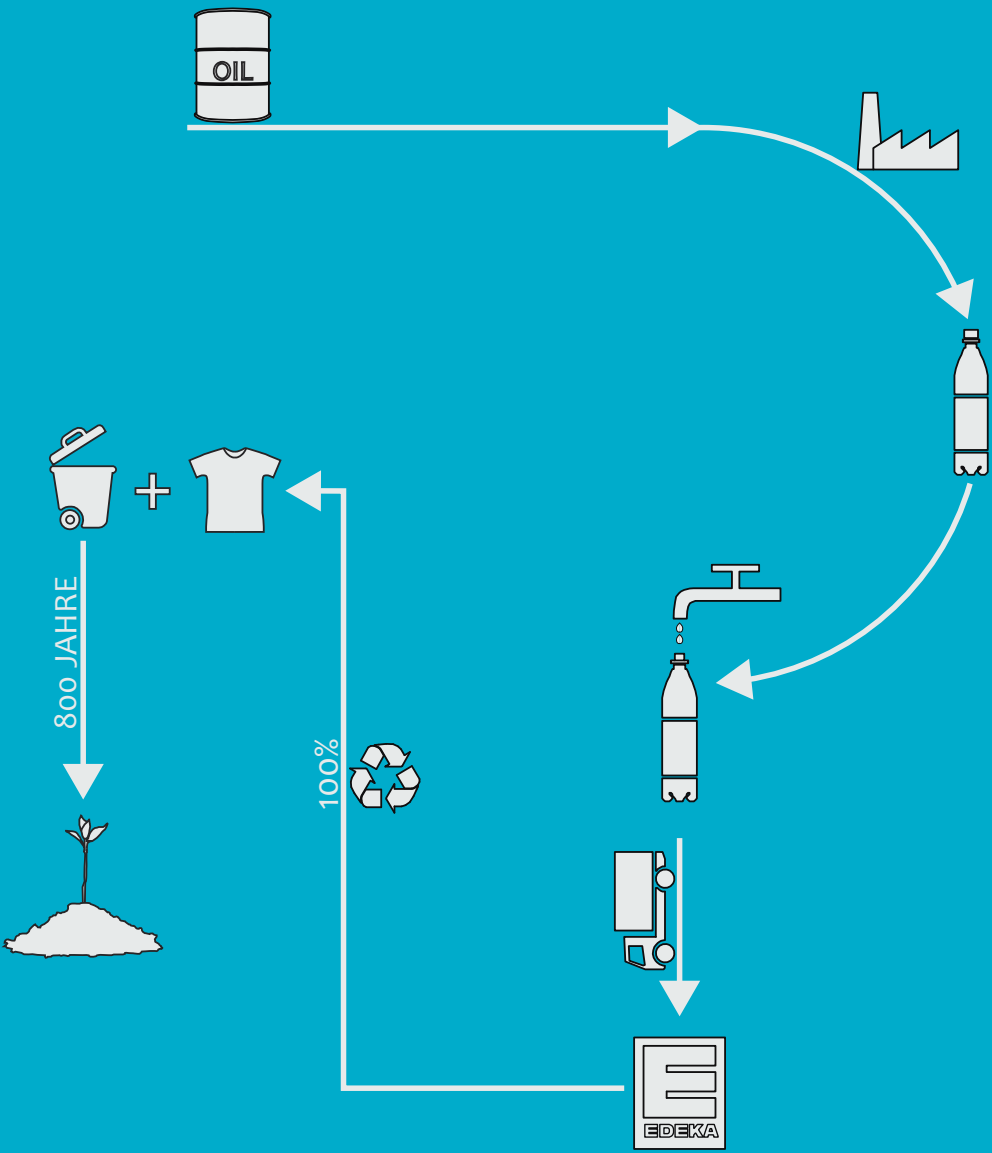


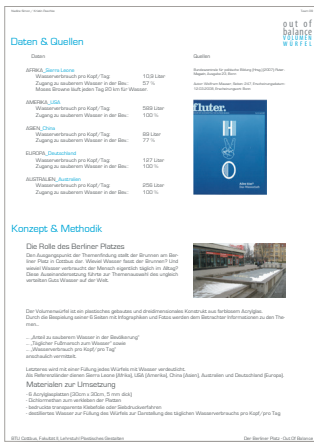
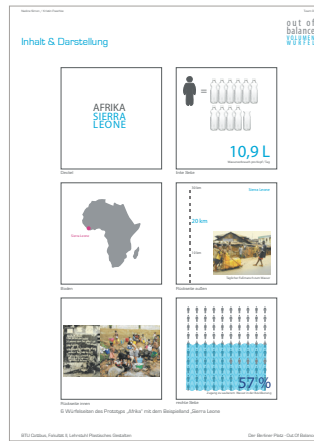


Water Bottle

Water is water, one could think. We go in a supermarket, and find a huge assortments of water. Water from France, Italy, even from the 22,700 km far away Fiji Island, water is imported. Is this range of production necessary? Wouldn't the reusable bottle with water from the region preferable? In this project, logos as symbols illustrate the production cycle of each water bottle from its production to its sale and disposal.

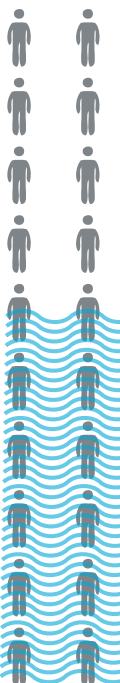
EINWEG
PLASTIK

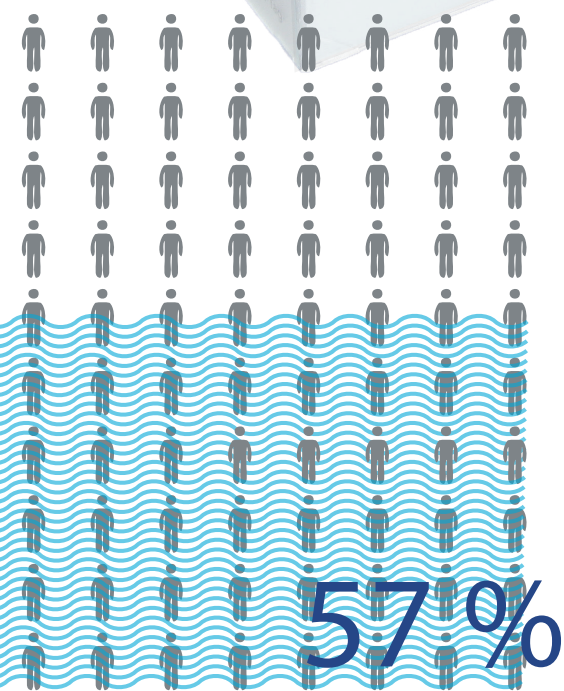
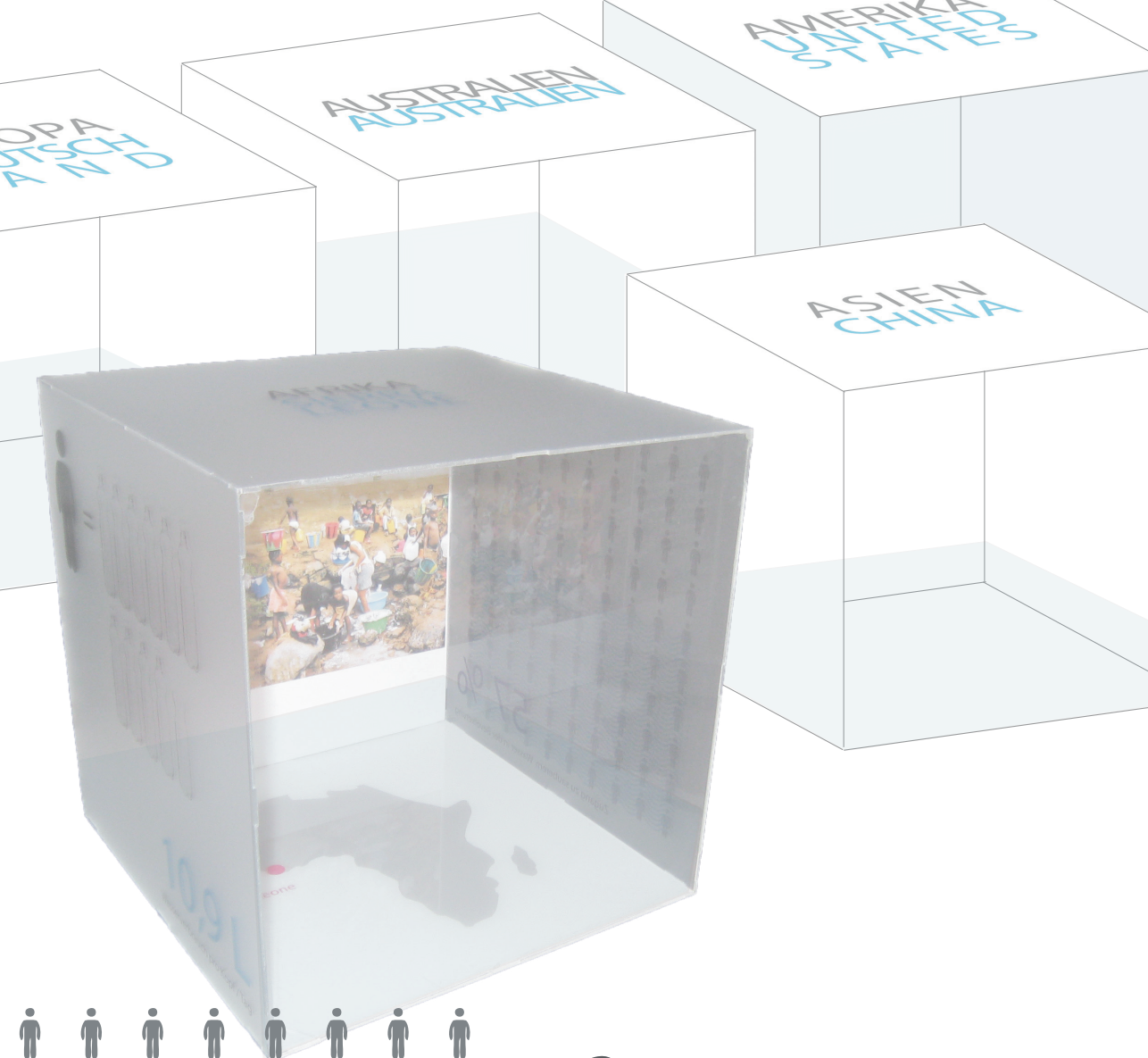




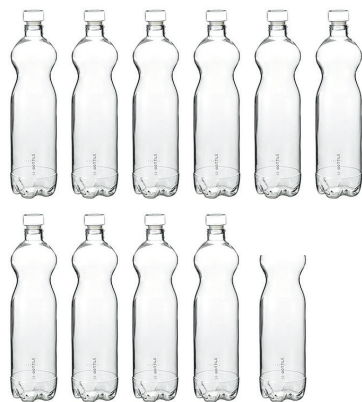
Volumetric Cubes

Water is a vital component of life. Nonetheless, it is inequitably dispersed throughout the world and not accessible to everyone. While in Sierra Leone, Africa, the water use per person per day amounts to 10,9 liters, and only 57% of the population even has access to clean water within 20 km, in the USA 589 liters are used per person. In our project, volumetric cubes demonstrate the water use of each continent, represented in each case by one country.



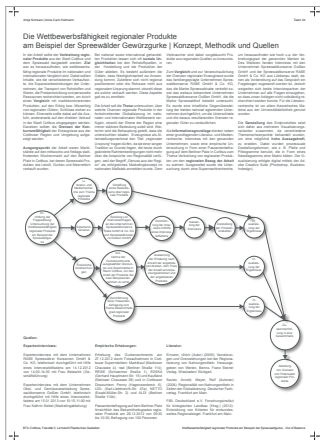
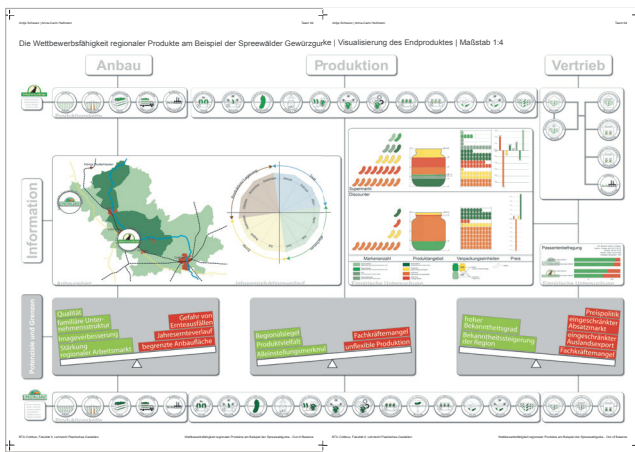


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57%

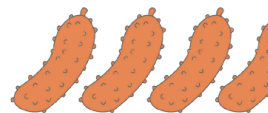
10,9 L



Competition of Regional Products

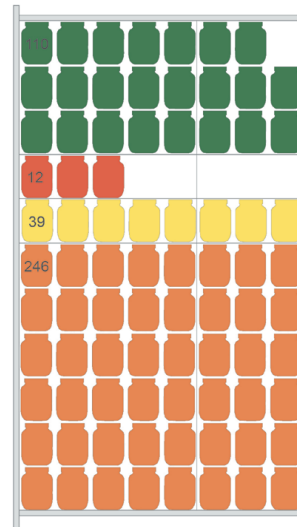
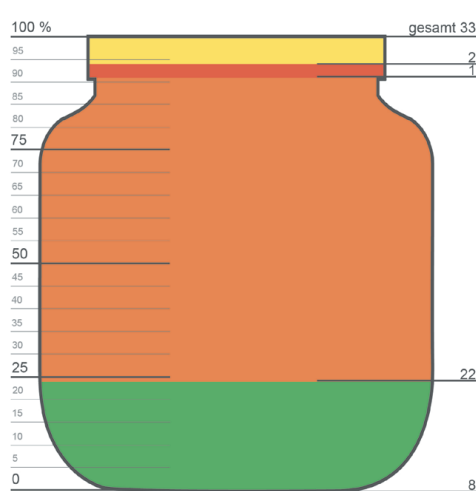
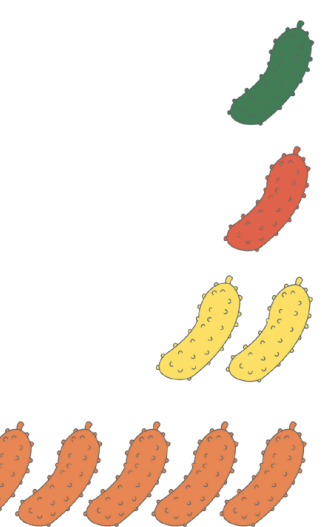
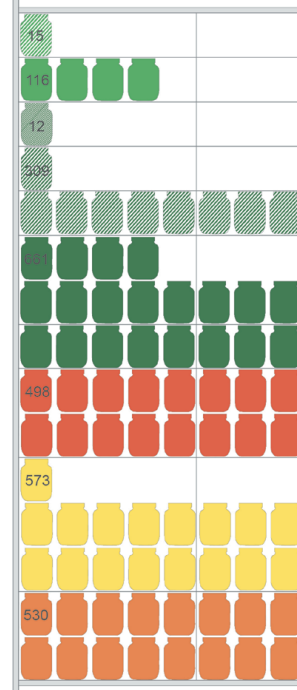
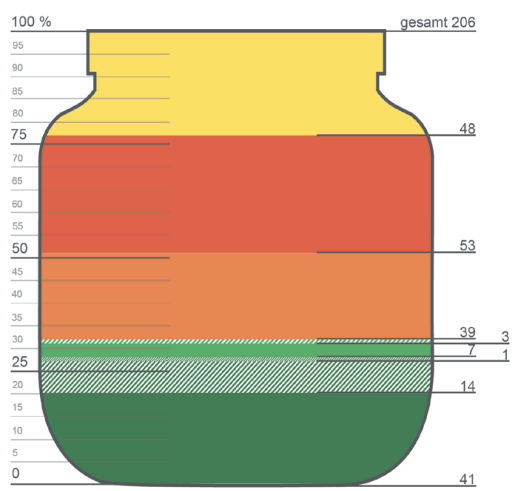
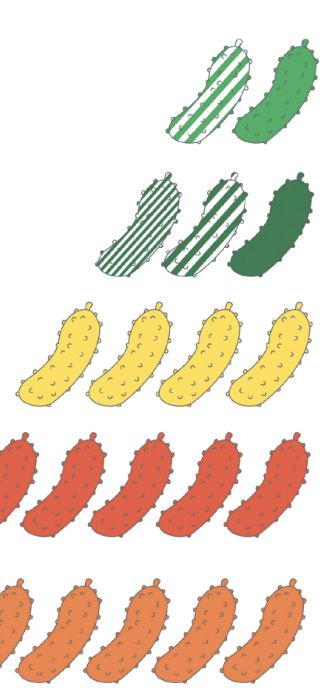
Our starting point was the weekly market at Berliner Platz, where regional products from Spreewald are sold, and we posed the question: can the regional Spreewald pickle even survive against the national and international competition of discounters, where nothing is possible without exploitation? Although 'regional enjoyment' is a growing trend, it is often an illusion. For our project, we interviewed two large regional businesses, the Spreewaldkonserve Golßen GmbH and RABE GmbH & Co.KG, and examined their potential in supra-regional supermarkets and discount shops.

Supermarkt
Discounter



Marke

-  Spreewaldliebe
(RABE Spreewälder Konserve)
-  Spreewaldrabe
(RABE Spreewälder Konserve)
-  Fitini
(Spreewaldkonserve Golßen)
-  SpreewaldKönigin
(Spreewaldkonserve Golßen)



Markenanzahl

Produktangebot

Verpackungsdesign

(Spreewald GmbH & Co. KG)

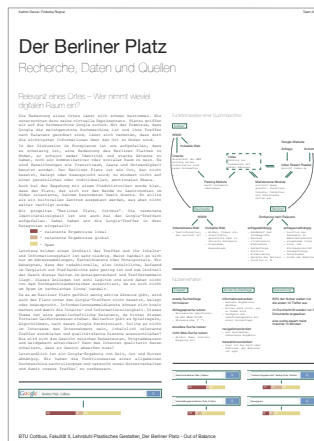
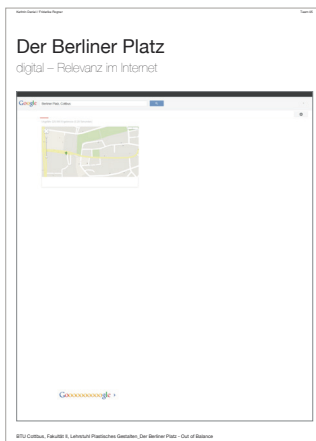
(Spreewald GmbH & Co. KG)

(Spreewald GmbH)

(Spreewald GmbH)

- Spreewaldhof (Spreewaldkonserven Golßen GmbH)
- Konkurrenz Weitere Regionale Marken
- Konkurrenz Eigenmarke der Supermärkte
- Konkurrenz Sonstige Marken

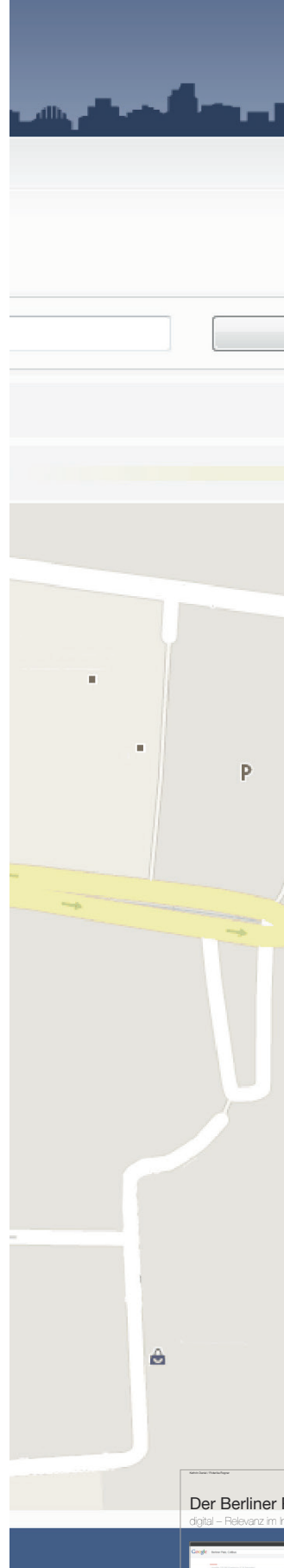


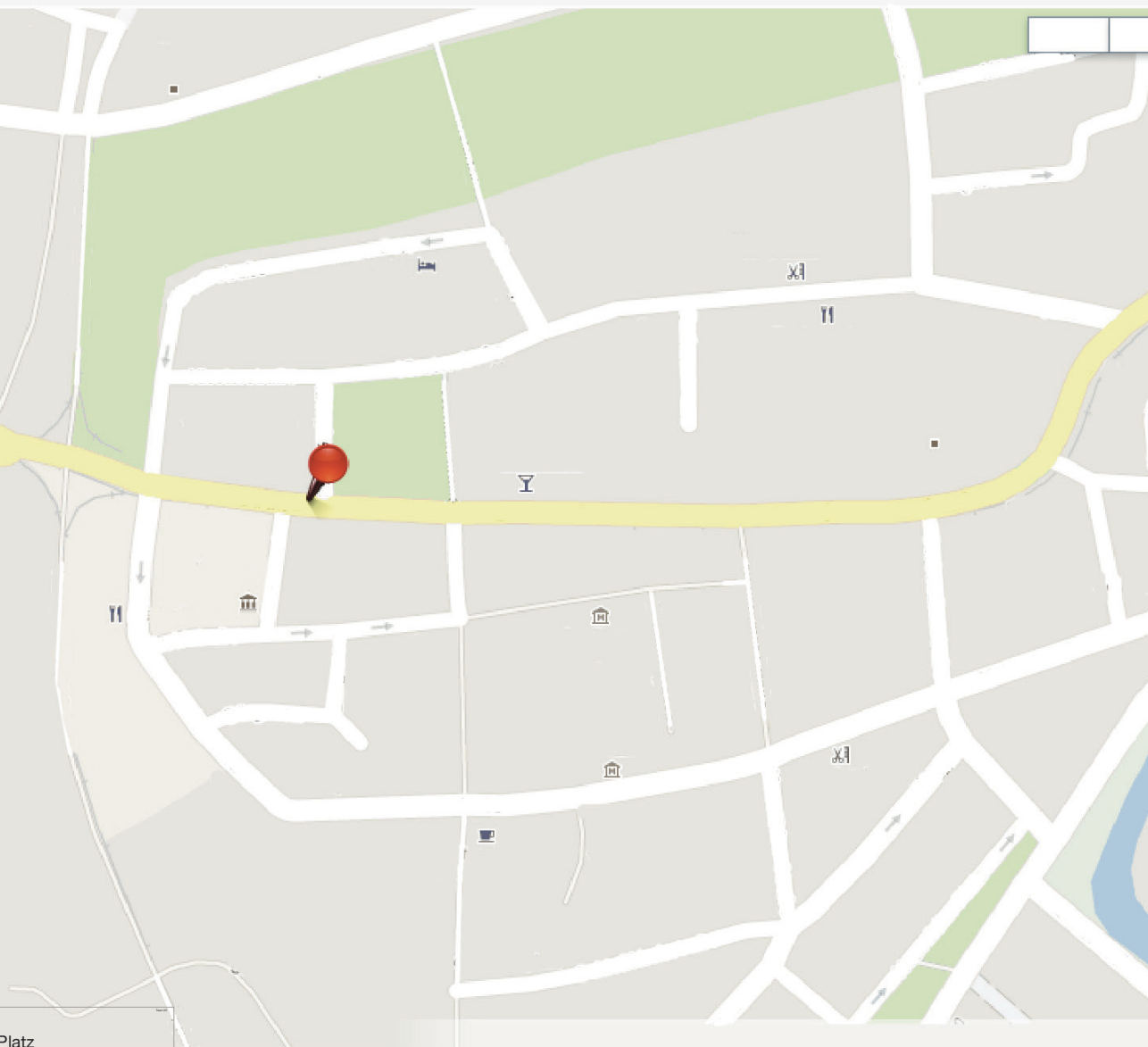


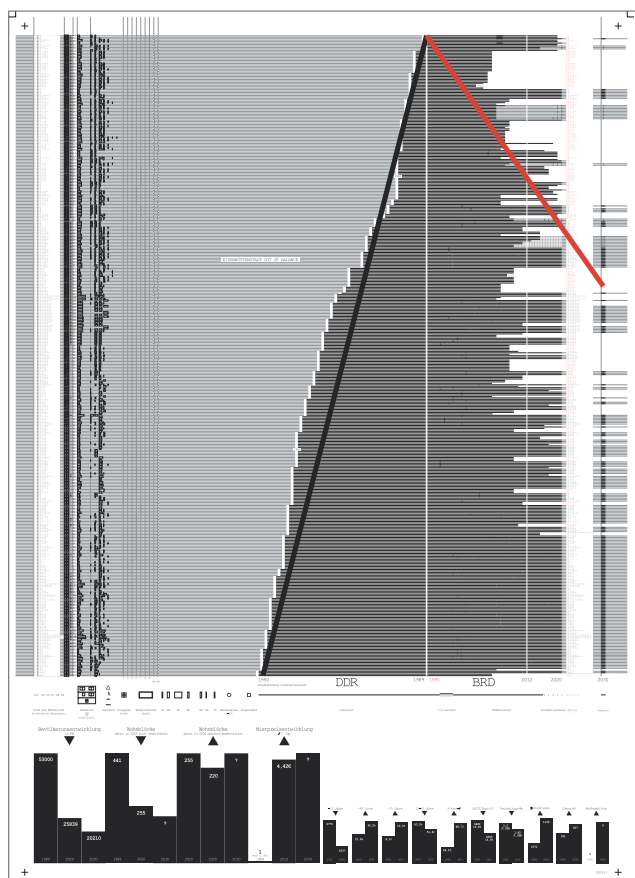
Berliner Platz

What remains when one googles 'Berliner Platz in Cottbus' and removes all the irrelevant information, like advertisements or menu bars in each of the websites?

Nothing. The content and percentage of information of these sites approaches zero. The actual urban square appears to function exceedingly as a transit zone, determined by communicative emptiness and a design of indecision. A 'non-space' in the sense of Marc Augé perhaps, which seems to be reflected on the digital plane.





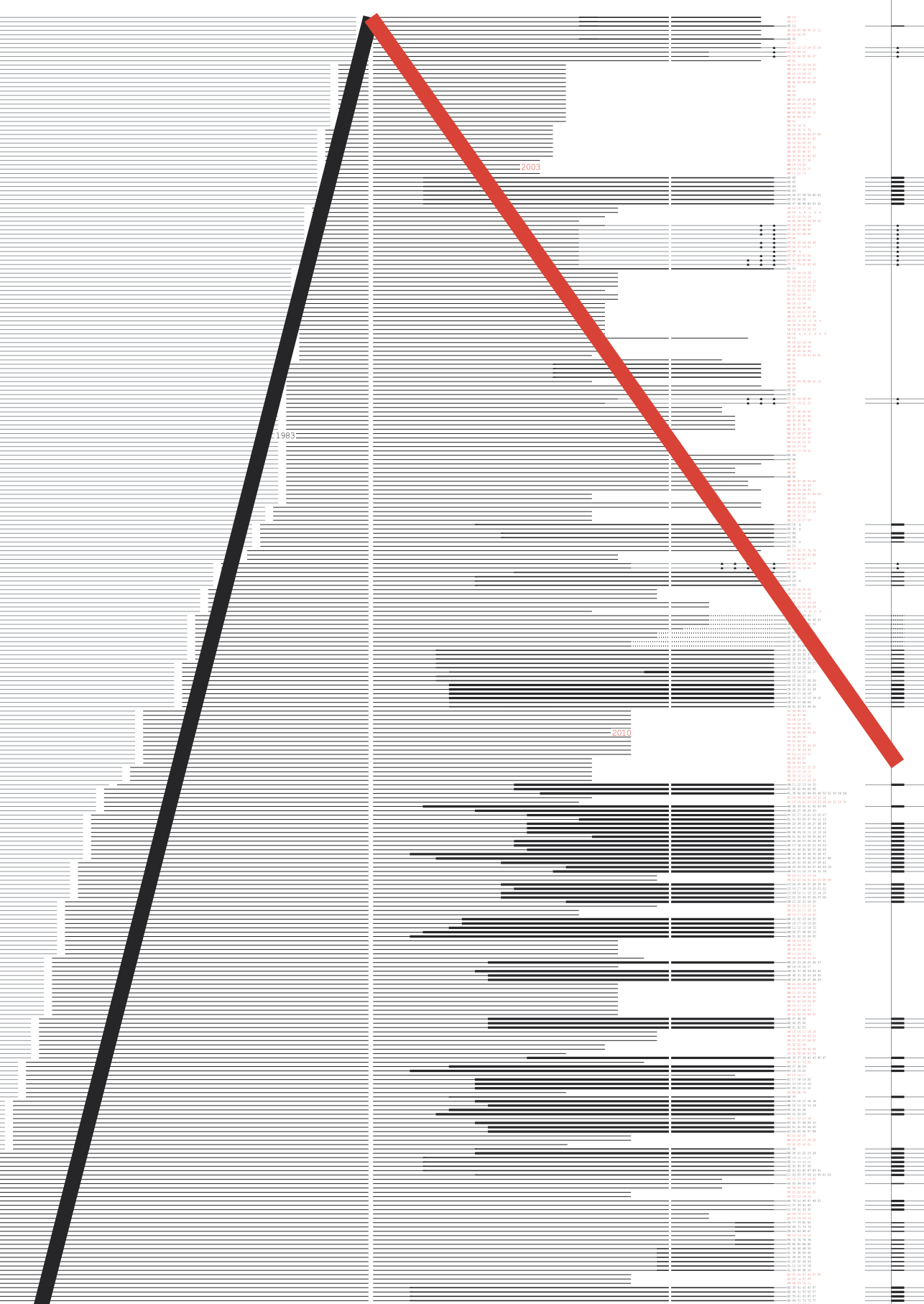


EISENHÜTTENSTADT OUT OF BALANCE

Eisenhüttenstadt

(1. Prize in the Competition, Arch+, Out of Balance)

Parallel to the current urban shrinking process in Cottbus, this project refers to Eisenhüttenstadt. Two graphic lines describe the population development and likewise the construction of “apartment complexes” in Eisenhüttenstadt: a black ascending line and a red descending line. The turning point occurs in the year 1989. The data shown in the diagram is also signified as days in a tear-off calendar, creating a synthesis with the detailed list of buildings, building attributes, ownership, and information about condition or demolition. The year 1989 describes a point of upheaval – the maximum population was reached at 53,000. The prognosis for 2013 is at 20,000 inhabitants.



The Display

The Presentation

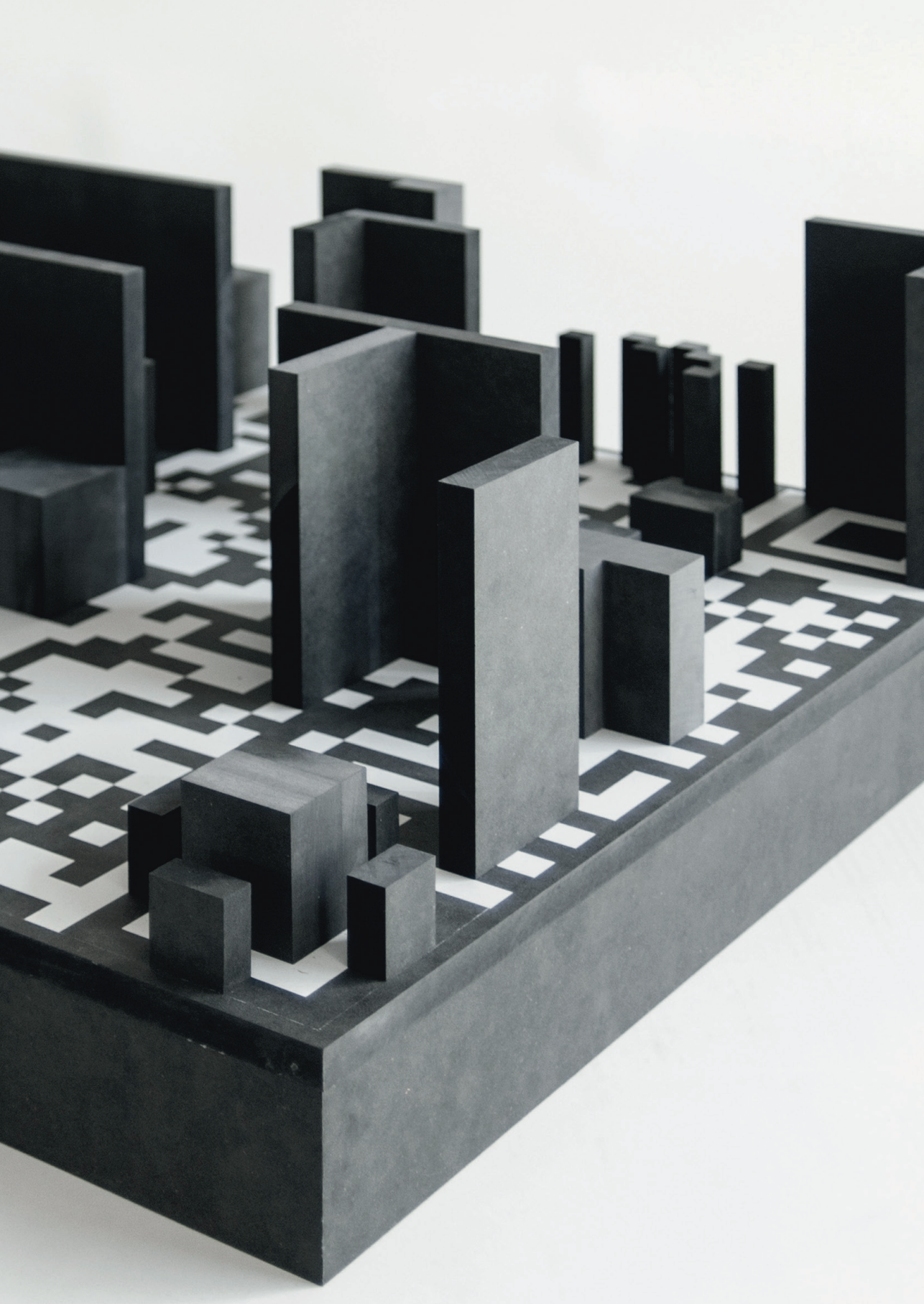
Almost all competition entries used phenomena and objects observed at Berliner Platz in Cottbus as a starting point. For this reason, it was important to develop a shared format of presentation for this strategy. On one hand, each project should be individually viewable, on the other hand, a centrally shared density and location of all the projects should be established. Based on the project "QR-Code" by the team Mutschke/Schichan, an exhibition platform was devised that used an actual code as a floor plan for various modular structures. From the typical bitmap grid, a standard format of 20x20x20cm was determined, out of which walls, pedestals, benches, or vitrines could be developed.

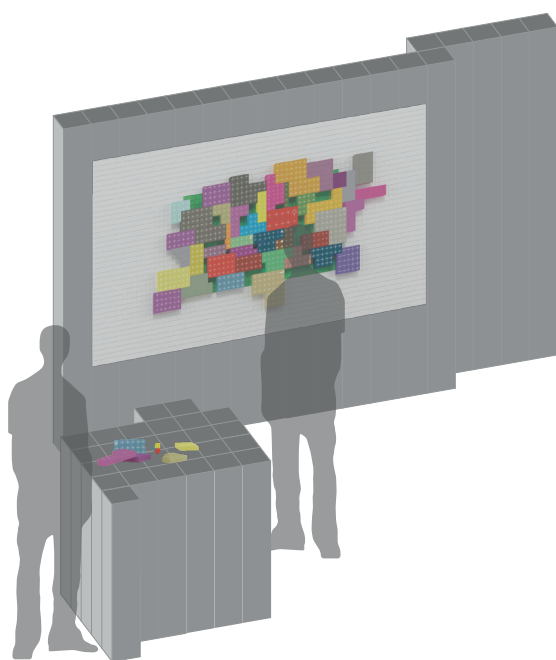
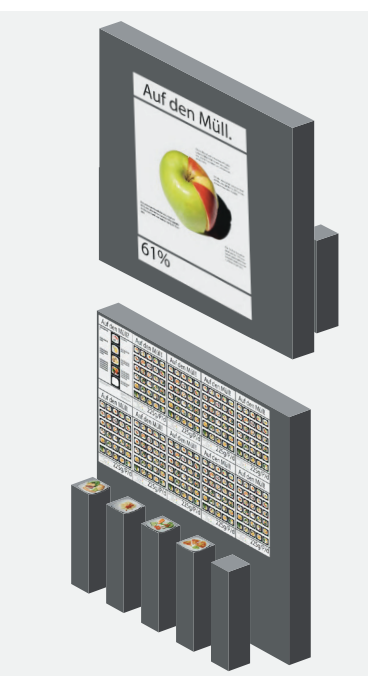
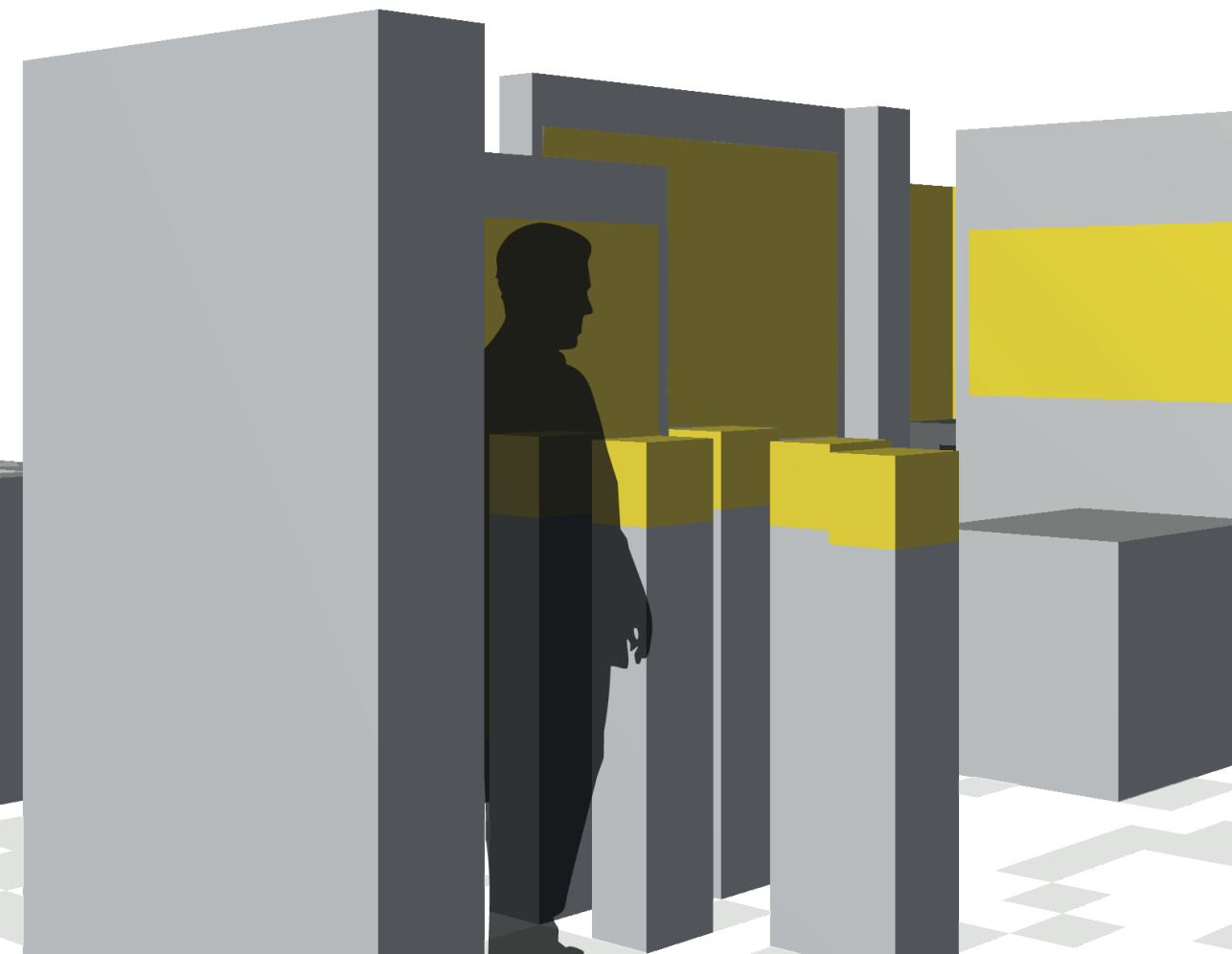
All teams were required to develop a presentation concept for their project that would then be integrated into a collective tableau.

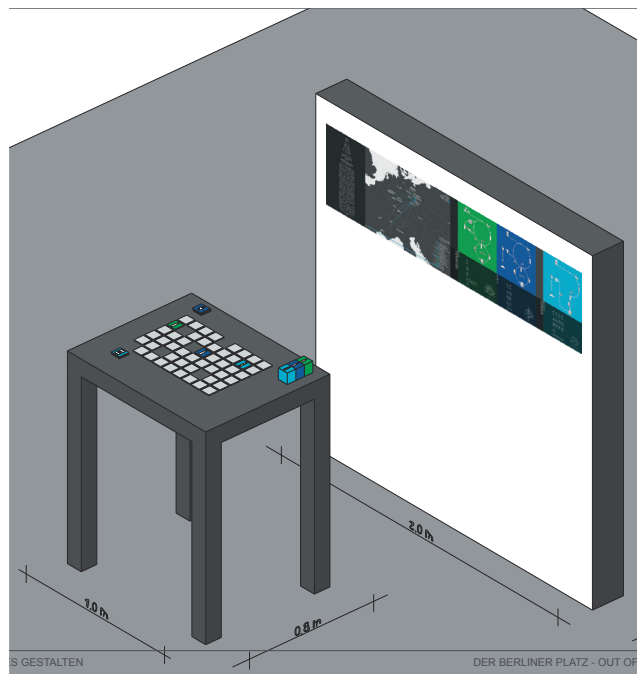
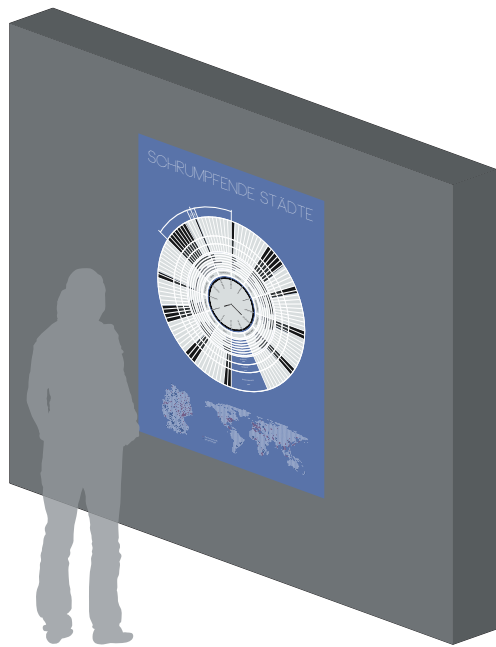
The size of the floor space of the display was determined to be 800 x 800 cm; the maximal size for wall elements 240 cm.

Materials: Anthrazite colored Topan; MDF with white surface; non-slippery lacquer paint.









Students' designs showing the placement of their projects within the QR-Code display.

Credits

Brandenburg University of Technology
Cottbus-Senftenberg, Faculty 2 – Architecture,
Civil Engineering and Urban Planning
Department of Sculptural Design

Seminar Out of Balance

Master Seminar: Architecture, Civil Engineering,
Urban Planning, and Erasmus Students
WS 2012/13

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Jo Achermann

Lecturers:

Sven Kalden, Megan Sullivan

Photos, Illustrations:

Lehrstuhl Plastisches Gestalten
Studierende

Design:

Sophie Höfig

Print:

Adtower Cottbus

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Lehrstuhl Plastisches Gestalten
Masterseminar
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